

**JOINT TESTIMONY OF
CHRON SMITH, home care consumer, 364 Benham Ave, Bridgeport
& TERRELL WILLIAMS, his PCA, West Haven**

RE: D.S.S. Medicaid waiver for home care services
February 16, 2017

Good evening members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Chron Smith. I live in Bridgeport and I receive home care services through the D.S.S. Medicaid waiver program for homecare services. I came here tonight to ask you to please make sure the Medicaid waiver homecare programs receive the full funding we need. The Governor's budget is a starting point. We need to maintain the funding we have, and we need additional funding to be able to hire and keep the PCAs we need to help us live at home.

I rely on Terrell and my other PCAs to help with my daily needs to remain independent. But I can only hire Terrell to work in my home for up to 25.75 hours a week because D.S.S. doesn't provide workers' compensation insurance. This means I have to hire 6 part-time PCAs to come in and out of my home, instead of just 2 full-time PCAs. I hope you will add funding to the D.S.S. Medicaid waiver program so I can be protected with this insurance.

Thank you for your support for my Medicaid waiver for home care services.

My name is Terrell Williams, and I'm from West Haven. I provide homecare for three D.S.S. Medicaid waiver clients with physical disabilities and traumatic brain injuries -- including Chron. I am so happy to help Chron come here to Hartford today to meet you.

I see first-hand how the D.S.S. Medicaid waiver programs is helping people like Chron live independently. I appreciate the Governor's support for home care, but I do think funding for this program should be increased to help the consumers who rely on it and the people they hire, like me, to provide home care services.

I got into this field to care for my mother, who has a progressive lung disease. Caring for my mother molded the way I care for all of my clients. It's my job to understand what my clients are going through and assess all of their needs, and actively work to improve their quality of life. I help with everyday tasks: brushing their teeth, getting them dressed and in and out of bed, bathing them, helping them take their medications, even dealing with wounds or bowel movements. My job also includes running errands or taking them to the grocery store and to doctors' appointments. I do all the mundane things that those of us without disabilities take for granted, but that my clients can't do for themselves. My overall goal is for my care to almost cancel out their disability, or make them forget their disability so that they feel whole again.

I do all this on \$13.50 per hour, without any workers' compensation insurance, sick days, or retirement.

Being a homecare provider is driven by a love for people and a desire to see our clients do well. But who cares for the caregivers? We need a living wage and workers' comp insurance to make sure that we also can get cared for if we need it.

I currently work for 3 clients for a total of almost 60 hours per week. While I love the work I do, I feel I have no choice but to work 7 days per week to both provide for my own family and also to provide the best possible care for my clients. Working these hours takes a toll: sometimes, I find myself dozing off due to pure exhaustion when I'm sitting in a

meeting or even driving. There is also a mental fatigue that sets in. When you spend 7 days per week worrying about another person's mental and physical health, it doesn't leave you much time to focus on your own.

Please consider expanding funding for D.S.S. Medicaid waiver services for home care in the final budget.